

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9027

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, MX

SUBJ: SITDOWN STRIKE AT LOS REYES' WOMEN'S PRISON

REF: MEXICO 15205

1. SUMMARY: IN SPITE OF RUMORS CIRCULATED IN THE LOCAL NEWS MEDIA, THE EMBASSY HAS CONFIRMED ON DECEMBER 6 WITH PRISON OFFICIALS IN SANTA MARTA MEN'S AND WOMEN'S, NORTE, AND ORIENTE PRISONS THAT NO PRISONERS ARE ON STRIKE IN THOSE PENAL INSTITUTIONS, ALTHOUGH LOS REYES DID EXPERIENCE BRIEF STRIKE. END SUMMARY. DECEMBER 1.

2. LOS REYES: CONOFFS VISITED LOS REYES WOMEN'S PRISON ON DECEMBER 3, TO INVESTIGATE REPORTED STRIKE REFTTEL. CONOFFS MET WITH DIRECTOR HILDA IBARRA AT HER REQUEST BEFORE INTERVIEWING THE PRISONERS. ACCORDING TO IBARRA, ALL OF THE AMERICAN WOMEN, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SEVEN, HAD ASSEMBLED ON DECEMBER 1 IN THE PRISON THEATER FOR A SITDOWN STRIKE AND REMAINED THERE FOR THE EVENING. IBARRA NOTED THAT THOSE ASSEMBLED WERE DISTRAUGHT AND WEEPING BECAUSE THEY FEARED THAT THE PAROLE BILL WOULD NOT BE ACTED ON FAVORABLY. IBARRA ADDED THAT WHILE THE SITDOWN STRIKE WAS TAKING PLACE, THE MEXICAN PRISONERS HAD GROUPED IN OPPOSITION TO THE AMERICANS AND WERE READY TO ATTACK THEM BUT REFRAINED AT THE DIRECTOR'S REQUEST.

IBARRA ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE UNCERTAINTY REGARDING THE OUTCOME OF THE PAROLE BILL WAS CREATING A TENSE

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ATMOSPHERE IN ALL MEXICO CITY PRISONS AND THAT THE

APPROACH OF THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS WAS MAKING THE PRISONERS EVEN MORE ANXIOUS TO RETURN HOME. SHE EXPRESSED HER DESIRE THAT THE PAROLE BILL BE RESOLVED QUICKLY AND RECOMMENDED THAT ONE COURSE OF CONSTRUCTIVE ACTION WOULD BE A OPEN LETTER TO THE MEXICAN CONGRESS FROM ALL PRISONERS, NOT JUST THE AMERICANS. IBARRA CONCLUDED WITH HER DESIRE THAT THE AMERICAN WOMEN BE PATIENT AND AWARE OF THE FACT THAT THE MEXICAN CONGRESS HAS BEEN VERY BUSY WITH NATIONAL PROBLEMS SUCH AS THE LAND INVASIONS, THE DEVALUATION, AND THE CHANGE OF PRESIDENTS.

3. CONOFFS NEXT SPOKE TO APPROXIMATELY HALF OF THE AMERICAN WOMEN PRISONERS. THE PRISONERS EXPLAINED THAT THEY HAD STRUCK BECAUSE THEY WERE VERY FRUSTRATED BY THE LACK OF GOM ACTION TO FULFILL ITS PROMISES THAT THE AMERICANS WOULD BE HOME BY CHRISTMAS, 1976.

HOWEVER, THE PRISONERS ALSO INDICATED THAT THEY HAD ENDED THE STRIKE BECAUSE THEIR OWN ENTHUSIASM FOR "POLITICAL" ACTIONS HAD DIMINISHED, SINCE THEY DID NOT SEE WHAT POSITIVE RESULTS COULD BE GAINED.

4. SANTA MARTA: CONOFFS ALSO VISITED SANTA MARTA MEN'S PRISON ON DECEMBER 3, AND LEARNED THAT SOME AMCIT PRISONERS HAD FORMED THE "INTERNATIONAL FREEDOM STRIKE COMMITTEE" AND WERE PLANNING TO INITIATE A STRIKE ON DECEMBER 4, 1976, TO EXPRESS THEIR FRUSTRATION AT THE LACK OF ACTION ON THE PAROLE BILL AND OTHER GOM "PROMISES". CONOFFS NOTED TO THE PRISONERS THAT A STRIKE COULD PREJUDICE THEIR CAUSE TO THE MEXICAN CONGRESS. ON DECEMBER 4, CONOFF CALLED SANTA MARTA DIRECTOR WHO INDICATED HE WAS ABOUT TO SPEAK WITH THE AMERICANS AND WOULD TELL THEM THAT THE PRISONERS WOULD BE FREE TO ABSTAIN FROM EATING AND WORKING BUT WOULD NOT HAVE PERMISSION TO VIOLATE PRISON REGULATIONS. ON DECEMBER 6, CONOFF TELEPHONED DIRECTOR WHO CONFIRMED THAT THE PRISONERS WERE NOT ON STRIKE.

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